

GENERAL ORDERS

No. 34

HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, DC, 6 September 1974

AWARD OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR



By direction of the President, under the Joint Resolution of Congress approved 12 July 1862 (amended by act of 3 March 1863, act of 9 July 1918 and act of 25 July 1963), the Medal of Honor (Posthumous) for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty is awarded by the Department of the Army in the name of Congress to:



Staff Sergeant *John G. Gertsch*, , United States Army, Company E, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, who distinguished himself during the period 15 to 19 July 1969 while serving as a platoon sergeant and platoon leader during combat operations in the A Shau Valley, Republic of Vietnam. During the initial phase of an operation to seize a strongly defended enemy position, Sergeant *Gertsch's* platoon leader was seriously wounded and lay exposed to intense enemy fire. Forsaking his own safety, without hesitation Sergeant *Gertsch* rushed to aid his fallen leader and dragged him to a sheltered position. He then assumed command of the heavily engaged platoon and led his men in a fierce counterattack that forced the enemy to withdraw. Later, a small element of Sergeant *Gertsch's* unit was reconnoitering when attacked again by the enemy. Sergeant *Gertsch* moved forward to his besieged element and immediately charged, firing as he advanced. His determined assault forced the enemy troops to withdraw in confusion and made possible the recovery of two wounded men who had been exposed to heavy enemy fire. Sometime later his platoon came under attack by an enemy force employing automatic weapons, grenade, and rocket fire. Sergeant *Gertsch* was severely wounded during the onslaught but continued to command his platoon despite his painful wound. While moving under fire and encouraging his men he sighted an aidman treating a wounded officer from an adjacent unit. Realizing that both men were in imminent danger of being killed, he rushed forward and positioned himself between them and the enemy nearby. While the wounded officer was being moved to safety Sergeant *Gertsch* was mortally wounded by enemy fire. Without Sergeant *Gertsch's* courage, ability to inspire others, and profound concern for the welfare of his men, the loss of life among his fellow soldiers would have been significantly greater. His conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism, and intrepidity at the cost of his life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit on him and the Armed Forces of his Country.



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By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

Official:

VERNE L. BOWERS

Major General, United States Army
The Adjutant General

FRED C. WEYAND

General, United States Army
Vice Chief of Staff

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